00625

1971/03/17

Reproduced at the National Archiv

DECLASSIFIED
Authority E.O. 12958
By CM NARA Date 9/5/02

17 March 1971

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Subj: Meeting with General Sirik Matak

Persons present:

General Sirik Matak
General Srey Laman - Chief of Staff
General V. Say - G4
General Thonguan-Fanmuong - Deputy G3
General Jhaffana Ngim - Chief of Engineers
General Hou-Hang Sin - G3

General Haig
Ambassador Swank
Mr. Ladd
LtCol Loeffke

Meeting began at 1130 and ended at 1300

General Haig - Began the meeting by giving an appraisal of the LAMSON operation and what it meant for the Vietnamese.

General Matak - Agreed that the Vietnamese operation in Laos had been very good for the Cambodians.

NOTE: General Matak and General Haig discussed operations around the CHUP Plantation.

General Matak - FANK is about to start operations northwest of Kompong Cham - the objective is to clear the enemy and begin pacification. Dong Be is a village that has been occupied by the enemy since 1952. These are Khmer who carry ideological training.

NOTE: General Haig asked General Matak what was his assessment on the impact LAMSON had on Cambodia.

General Matak - The operation in Laos has helped us a great deal. Since the operation began we have not noticed any reinforcements from the North. The POWs tell us that they have been expecting ammunition and supplies for two months. The operation has created a good state of affairs that we will exploit by conducting military operations and pacification.

Beginning tomorrow we will launch a "people's war" to take advantage of this - another point is that the enemy is refusing combat - there is no resistance to our operations. Present time we are giving much attention to clearing operations east, south and west of Phnom Penh. In this area the enemy is now in the process of withdrawing to the mountains.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

DECLASSIFIED
Authority E.O. 12958
By CM NARA Date 9/5/02

General Haig - I have always thought very highly of your views, would you tell us how you see the war.

General Matak - This is my personal opinion.

a. I feel that the Indochinese War is nearing its end. Since 1955 Hanoi has wanted to replace the French as the dominant power. North Vietnam's desire to be the master in Indochina has been and is stimulated and helped by the Soviet Union and China.

b. The North Vietnamese have been claiming that they had already conquered 3/4 of South Vietnam. Now South Vietnamese troops are carrying the fight close to the borders of North Vietnam and the enemy can no longer say that they have conquered anything. South Vietnam has carried the fight close to North Vietnam. Hanoi, psychologically, is very low on morale as North Vietnamese troops are not conquering but fighting on its borders. Chou En Lai's visit is considered as a moral comfort. The NVA were very bad off and needed this support. I do not think the Chinese will intervene in the war with combat troops. I have known Chou En Lai personally for 30 years and I do not think he will have China intervene with troops. He has been acting in a similar manner since I've known him.

General Haig - Since Lon Nol left you are doing a magnificant job.

General Matak - We have been working as if he were here with us.

General Haig - I am interested in your force structure.

General Matak - We have two projects. We are reconstructing the General Staff and the Ministry of Defense:

- these organizations were for time of peace. We are also trying to accomplish a census.
- because Lon Nol had been so busy, he had not had the time to do all these things.
- we have established a ceiling that will not go beyond 220,000 by 1972.
- I will send you this plan for comments. I hope that the President will see it.
- perhaps in a week it will be ready.

General Haig - I am happy to see that this plan is accompanied with economic steps to keep Cambodia strong.

General Matak - This is due to a lot of work done by the Ambassador:

- I am very happy to know that my people are working with the embassy concerning these matters.
- you know that we have suffered for a year from the impact of the war.

DECLASSIFIED
Authority E.O. 12958
By CN NARA Date 9/5/02

- we hope to protect militarily the Mekong to give us the economic help we need.
- we have created a special task force to ensure the protection of the Mekong.
- we are taking special measures to protect Route 4-this is under MR 3. The last three convoys have not been harassed.
- General Svasemar is responsible for coordinating the civil and military portions of the protection of the Mekong.

General Haig – I am encouraged to see the type of leadership and momentum that you are showing - I am happy to see that the FANK units that are now returning from South Vietnam are ready to join the battle. I am happy to see that many of your officers and troops have been tested in battle and are now combat ready.

General Matak - I am in agreement with you.

General Haig - There are rumors about possible trouble in the capital.

General Matak - These rumors represent communist rumors. I have just explained to my officers that the Reds are spreading rumors that I will be making a coup de 'etat. I have also just received from H. K. a report that there have been manifestations in Phnom Penh for a return to monarchy. There are articles already written to say that we are going to make a coup de 'etat. We are getting ready for the 18th of March - the youth are solidly behind us. Information that communists are spending a great deal of money on the youth. I want to assure you that all of these rumors have no foundations. Neither the generals you see here or myself have any intention of conducting a coup.

May I make requests? To protect Route 4 we need three batteries of 105 artillery and for the protection of the Mekong River we need 4 batteries. Now that the Ho Chi Minh Trail is cut, we need to pay attention to the coast as the enemy will try to get his supplies through the coast. We need patrol craft to do this.

Mr. Ladd - We have asked for 14 more patrol craft. $300,000/boat - the crews need to be trained. You have three boats now.

General Matak - We need arms for self-defense. Arms for the villagers. 1,000 shotguns are in. We need 10,000 more. We have pacification programs and the villagers must play an important part in it. The population is asking for these weapons. We have ralliers everwhere and they want to be armed to fight against the enemy.

DECLASSIFIED
Authority E.O. 12958
By CN NARA Date 9/5/02

- The distribution of the arms will be handled by the Governor and the military commander - when the military arrive they start pacification and the need to arm the populace begins.

- If there is a chance I hope to see you in Washington. Please say hello to General Lon Nol and Admiral McCain and to President Nixon how much we appreciate the support and aid he and his people are giving for us.

General Haig – I will, and please accept my feeling of admiration for what you are doing.

General Matak - What we do we do for our country. It is a country who wants to live in freedom.

COMMENT: General Sirik Matak displayed a great deal of enthusiasm and confidence.. The general seemed extremely satisfied with the military operations that had been conducted by the Vietnamese. His primary concerns (apparently shared by the generals present) seemed to be to obtain adequate artillery support to protect Routes 4 and the Mekong South of Phnom Penh, arming the populace that was being liberated and obtaining patrol craft to deny the shores to enemy supply craft. General Matak felt that his people were asking to be armed and trained and that all that was needed was to afford him weapons and instruction and would accomplish the job of Cambodia defeating the enemy.